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**SCHAKOWSKY HAILS DECISION BY ADMINISTRATION THAT WILL HELP FAMILIES
NEW REGULATIONS CLARIFY THAT RECEIVING MEDICAID,
CHIP, OR OTHER BENEFITS WILL NOT AFFECT IMMIGRATION STATUS**

WASHINGTON, D.C U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) today hailed the decision by the Clinton Administration that will help ensure that immigrant families have access to health care and other critical benefits. Schakowsky has been lobbying the Administration on this issue since taking office in January, 1999.

The new guidelines, effective immediately, clarify that receiving school lunch or food stamps or enrolling in Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) will not affect immigration status. Furthermore, federal agencies have been directed to work with community organizations to educate the public about the new policy.

Schakowsky, who recently met with Immigration and Naturalization Service Commissioner Doris Meissner and has written to her in the past on this issue, said, "This is the news we have been waiting for. Thousands of Chicago area families and children will have access to the healthcare and the nutrition they need without fear. This is a welcome announcement for an immigrant rich community like the 9th District and for families throughout the nation."

Schakowsky has also written to Attorney General Janet Reno and met with White House officials, calling on them to issue clear guidelines.

The confusion created by the lack of guidelines has made delivery of many vital services to immigrants and their families impossible. Immigrants feared that participation in these programs constitutes a public charge, which may jeopardize their immigration status or even lead to deportation.

The Chicago Public Schools had delayed implementation of their entire CHIP outreach program because they were unable to assure immigrant families that CHIP enrollment will not be considered a public charge.

Attached is a fact sheet describing the new regulations.

**NEW STEPS ENSURE THAT LEGAL IMMIGRANTS WILL HAVE ACCESS TO
CRITICAL HEALTH CARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES WITHOUT FEAR**

These new regulations provide clear and consistent guidance that receiving health care and other critical services cannot be used to deny individuals admission to the United

States or to bar legal permanent resident status, or as a basis for deportation. Eligible legal immigrants can now receive the following benefits without fear of jeopardizing their immigration status:

Health insurance under Medicaid and CHIP. There have been reports of individuals being told that receiving Medicaid or CHIP will negatively effect their immigration status leading to widespread concern in the immigrant community about enrolling in Medicaid or CHIP, even where the beneficiary is a child who is a United States citizen. These new regulations take a significant step towards eliminating that concern by clarifying that legal immigrants who are eligible for these programs (with the exception of institutionalization for long term care) will not face adverse immigration consequences.

Access to immunization, testing, and treatment for communicable disease. After an outbreak of rubella in New York in 1997, public health officials learned that the major reason that people had not been vaccinated was the fear that using health department services would affect their immigration status. These new regulations take new steps to protect the health of all Americans by ensuring legal immigrants can access -without fear - free immunizations, testing, and treatment for communicable diseases, such as rubella or tuberculosis.

Access to essential nutrition programs. These new regulations remove the perceived barriers to receiving critical nutrition benefits, including Food Stamps, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), the National School Lunch and Breakfast programs, and other supplementary and emergency food assistance programs. Access to these benefits is extremely important for legal immigrant children. Recent studies by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Census Bureau indicate that Hispanic families with children have among the lowest food security rates (70 percent), placing them at risk for malnutrition.

Other supports for families. These regulations also make it possible for eligible legal immigrants to also access important social supports for working families, such as child care services, housing assistance, energy assistance, emergency disaster relief, foster care and adoption assistance, transportation vouchers, educational assistance, and job training programs without fear of adverse immigration consequences.□